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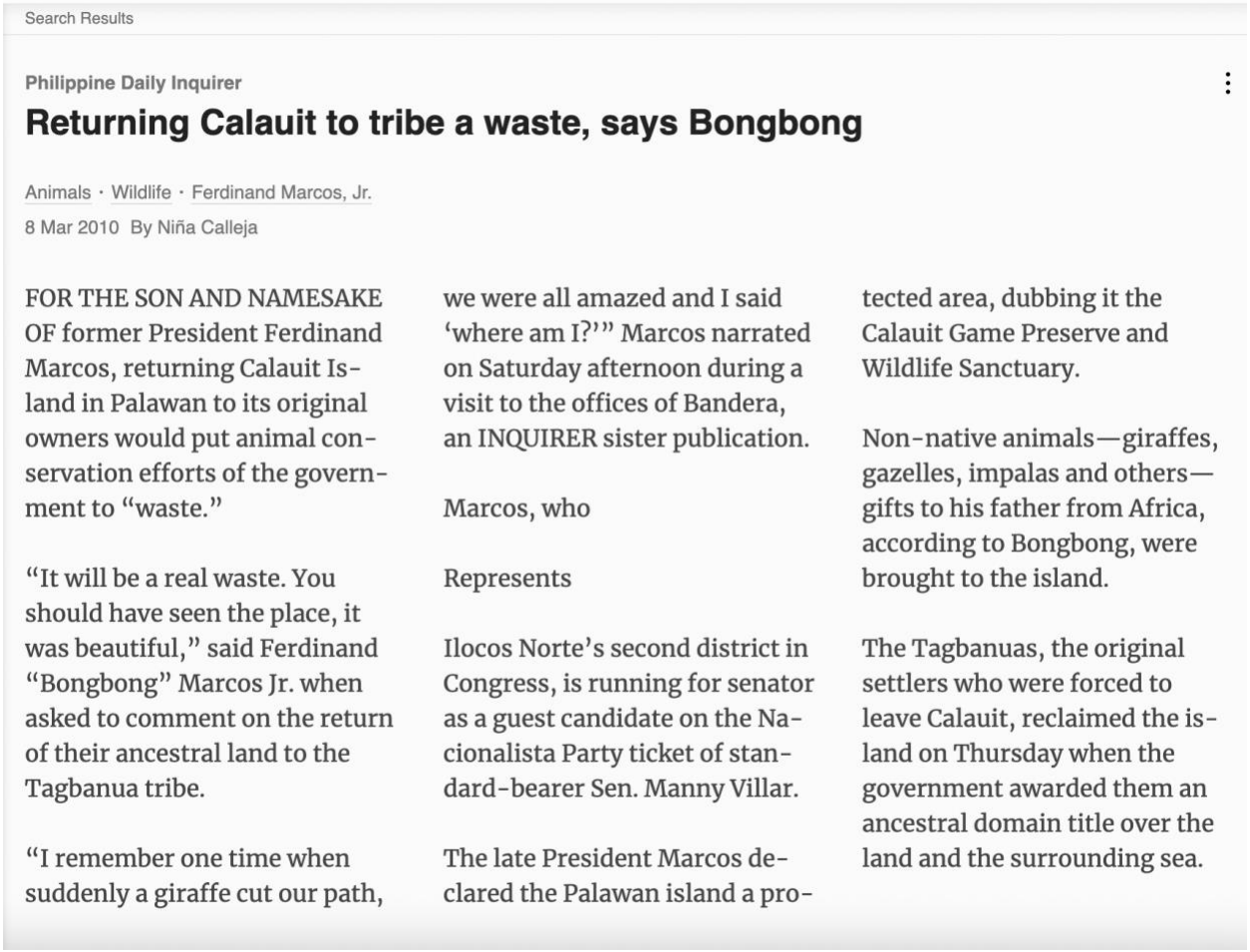

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Philippine Daily Inquirer

Returning Calauit to tribe a waste, says Bongbong

Animals · Wildlife · Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.

8 Mar 2010 By Niña Calleja

FOR THE SON AND NAMESAKE OF former President Ferdinand Marcos, returning Calauit Island in Palawan to its original owners would put animal conservation efforts of the government to "waste."

"It will be a real waste. You should have seen the place, it was beautiful," said Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. when asked to comment on the return of their ancestral land to the Tagbanua tribe.

"I remember one time when suddenly a giraffe cut our path, we were all amazed and I said 'where am I?'" Marcos narrated on Saturday afternoon during a visit to the offices of Bandera, an INQUIRER sister publication.

Marcos, who

Represents

Ilocos Norte's second district in Congress, is running for senator as a guest candidate on the Nacionalista Party ticket of standard-bearer Sen. Manny Villar.

The late President Marcos declared the Palawan island a protected area, dubbing it the Calauit Game Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary.

Non-native animals—giraffes, gazelles, impalas and others—gifts to his father from Africa, according to Bongbong, were brought to the island.

The Tagbanuas, the original settlers who were forced to leave Calauit, reclaimed the island on Thursday when the government awarded them an ancestral domain title over the land and the surrounding sea.

Marcos Jr., however, doubted awarding them the title would do the Tagbanuas any good.

"I don't know if they are going to do better now if they come back to Calauit. They had a nice relocation. We built schools, hospitals, everything (they needed)," he said.

The Tagbanuas had been away from their ancestral land for almost 30 years.

Marcos, whose pastimes include shooting and hunting, admitted that he and his friends went hunting on Calauit in the 1980s.

"We used to hunt wild boar because they were pests. They usually ate the offspring of animals we placed there," he said.

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He said that every time he and his friends visited Calauit they released turtles, deer and fish on and around the island.

"We also used to count how many gazelles and giraffes there were," Marcos said.

He said he and his friends ate the boars they killed and shared them with the local residents.

"What's wrong with hunting? We only hunted wild boar," he said.

His father, he said, declared Calauit a protected area because it was a good place to keep endangered animals.

"He was a hunter and a nature lover. We wanted to have a place to hunt. I know people will say hunting is bad. But sometimes when we went hunting we just watched the animals for hours," he said.

Asked if he would help the Palawan government make Calauit a protected area again, Marcos Jr. said: "What for? They will think I have a personal interest because it was my private hunting ground."

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